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INTRODUCTION

The Geneva Accords signed by the Government of Afghanistan (ROA) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (GOP) in Geneva on 4/14/88 called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and included a Bilateral agreement concerning the voluntary return of refugees from Pakistan. This Agreement proposed the establishment of a mixed Commission for the purpose of coordinating and supervising the operations (Article IV) and it requested the United Nations High Commission (UNHCR) to provide assistance in this effort (Article VI). The Agreement is to remain in effect for a period of 18 months beginning on 4/15/88, when further arrangements may be made (Article VII: United States Senate, 1988).

On 4/11/88, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar appointed Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan as the Coordinator for United Nations Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan; a month later (11 June) the Secretary General issued an appeal on behalf of the people of Afghanistan, which included an estimated budget of US$1.16 billion for the first 18 months of relief-repatriation and an additional US$848 million for 3 years of reconstruction-recovery programs during 1990-93 (Appeal of the Sec'y Gen'l, 1988).

These estimates, compiled from exhaustive, but hastily compiled, reports by individual agencies within the UN system, covered such components as food, shelter, health, education, agriculture, communications, roads, industries and power. A cultural survey to determine war damage to historic monuments, museums and archives was also included.

No component addressed the special needs of women.

As of July 1989, no appreciable number of refugees had returned to Afghanistan because the war continues and political solutions have yet to be determined. In fact, according to UNHCR/Islamabad, between 11/1/88 and 4/15/89, nearly 63,000 new Afghan refugees arrived in Pakistan, largely as a result of Kabul regime bombing of civilian areas around Jalalabad (Refugees: 65:6). By September 1989 the Chief Commissioner of Refugees in Peshawar estimated that the number had increased to 75,000.

The singlemost factor deterring refugees, however, is the presence of millions of landmines, variably estimated from 3-30 million, which have already killed or maimed upwards of 25,000 men, women and children, and will threaten lives for years to come (New York Times 8/14/88). Nine million dollars were budgeted in the Sec'y Gen'l's appeal to tackle what was described by a spokesman for the Coordinator as the largest mine-clearing task the world has ever faced. Plans have been made to provide intensive mine awareness and clearance training to refugees as well as populations remaining in the liberated areas of Afghanistan so that each village may organize disposal teams composed of men, women and children capable of identifying and neutralizing mines. Offers of equipment and training have been received from over a dozen nations; some teaching materials in Afghan languages and other appropriate instruction materials designed for non-literates are being developed, but progress has been excruciatingly slow considering the magnitude and urgency of the problem.

All these programs will take time, as will the resolution of major military and political matters; precious time in which much needs to be accomplished if new disasters and hardships are to be avoided. The UN system, together with many non-governmental organizations, is trying to meet these challenges through projects too numerous to discuss here other than to mention expanded and accelerated immunization coverage and supplementary feeding for women and children. Returnees

must be in the best possible health before they leave Pakistan in order to meet the rigorous challenges ahead. Women of child-bearing age are being particularly targeted because many suffer from severe nutritional anemia caused by unbalanced diets, an alarmingly high birth rate and inadequate spacing between pregnancies; premature and underweight babies resulting from the weakened condition of these mothers are vulnerable to a variety of pervasive physical, developmental and emotional problems (L. & N.H. Dupree, 1988).

Even though intensified training programs for community health workers, male and female, are being launched, it will be a long time before health systems for the rural areas can be effectively established. The returnees will be dependent on these trained health workers for basic, primary health care. Diarrhea, for instance, is the primary cause of infant and child mortality. Oral rehydration therapy (ORT) is an effective remedy which is relatively simple to administer. The more women instructed in the preparation of oral rehydration salts, the stronger the population will be.

An urgent task yet to be adequately undertaken is the assessment of the special needs which must be addressed if women are to realize their true potential through integrated inclusion in the total development strategy for Afghanistan. Without maximum participation by women, no development scheme will succeed.

This paper addresses some of the patterns which appear to be emerging and explores the manner in which they affect the way Afghan women view the future. Finally, a few possible approaches are proposed which may offer women a productive, participatory role in rebuilding Afghanistan. The discussion is based on 16 years residence in Afghanistan and 10 years of research among the refugees in Pakistan.

CURRENT SITUATION

Background

The situation of refugee women in Pakistan has changed dramatically in the 10 years since refugees began arriving in numbers far beyond the ability of local groups to extend traditional tribal hospitality (N.H. Dupree, 1987a:376). Congestion in the Refugee Tented Villages, established after 4/79 by the GOP and UNHCR, imposed psychological as well as physical hardships on women, the majority of whom came from villages where they generally enjoyed spacious quarters and relatively free movement within kin-related and/or tribally-oriented settlements. The division of responsibility and labor within households was gender-based, but close interrelationships between male/female roles were acknowledged by all parties and this gave rise to mutual respect (N.H. Dupree, 1988a: 36).

Women among lower and mid-income groups in pre-exodus Afghanistan upheld similar roles although the male/female interrelationships were not as strong. Men worked at jobs about which women understood little and this consequently confined women more strictly to reproductive and domestic chores.

Educated and elite urban women, on the other hand, had benefitted from over 50 years of a steadily evolving emancipation movement and by 1978 they took education and careers outside the home for granted (Rahimi, 1986).

Current Patterns

In Pakistan, however, the refugee concentrations crowded together diverse tribal and ethnic groups from different geographic regions. In addition, the natural tendency of threatened societies to impose protective restraints on women was particularly applicable in this situation since Afghan culture entrusts women with upholding family and national honor and perpetuating those social and cultural values the massive exodus sought to preserve (N.H. Dupree, 1988a: 43).

Women, consequently, are severely restricted. A visit to a clinic is still almost the only respectable outing for many refugee women, and untold numbers are denied even this small iota of freedom (Krijgh: 24). Until recently, stringent controls severely inhibited young urban women and most professionals, committing all but a courageous few to sit idly at home while suffering from social suffocation. Within the last 3 years, however, a veritable explosion has taken place among urban women. Although they by no means enjoy anything remotely akin to past educational opportunities, a discernable momentum carries them forward. To give only one example, enrollment at Malalai High School, one of a handful of secondary schools for women in Peshawar, nearly quadrupled during 1987 (Int'l Rescue Committee, 1988:5). Its very existence is a miracle considering its controversial beginnings.* Other girls attend special classes of various sorts and all these institutions underscore the fact that these women have been pent up for too long. They are raring to go and the energy generated by their expectations is palpable.

Some of these young women use these short-term classes as stepping stones to employment; others train in teaching institutions such as the women's hospitals. A lucky talented few have gained admission to Pakistani medical schools.

Who are these girls and what motivates them to pursue opportunities when the social environment still views such activities to be improper? They come from a variety of geographic but mostly urban areas, particularly Kabul, where their male family members were, for the most part, mid-range government bureaucrats or professionals who traditionally encouraged education for women (N.H. Dupree, 1984). Family support, therefore, is a key factor.

Economic factors also come into consideration for urban refugees living outside the official refugee camps are not entitled to refugee assistance and consequently they experience considerable economic hardships. Scores of men remain jobless but the relief organizations are desperate for qualified women. Almost every educated woman willing to work can find employment, <u>if</u> her family approves.

These positive changes, however, are tempered by continuing disputes regarding the appropriateness of activities for women in the context of Islam. Participants are minuscule in terms of the overall population and its needs.

Tense debates take place between those who have been kept in strict seclusion since the inception of the exodus and new arrivals who feel humiliated by unaccustomed restraints. These exchanges reflect the uneasiness accompanying current attempts to inject conservative ideals into moderate segments of Afghan society which have encouraged women to participate in the totality of society for over half a century.

Political Charters and Women

Charters issued by the political leadership of the 7 major parties in Peshawar, mindful of the values for which their 10-year struggle has been fought, are based on the primacy of Islamic principles. Regarding women, these documents range from explicit insistence on strict seclusion to generalized statements supporting women's participation in the task of development.

The most explicit statements about women appear in the Charter of the Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan led by Engineer Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (*Afghan Jehad*, 1 (3): 59). Maintaining that the majority of Afghans "demand" the establishment of a complete Islamic order based on the Qur'an and the Hadith as the primary source of all laws, the charter puts forth the following standards regarding women's place in society:

* The principal founder of the school left Peshawar early in 1989 because of death threats against her and her family.

Chapter I: The Constitution: Article 6. Laws and regulations that will curb at the earliest adultery, drunkenness, gambling, obscenity and moral corruption will be enacted.

Article 7. The issue of veil by women, as dictated by the *Shariat* will be totally observed throughout the country and their *Shariat* and legal rights will be restored.

Article 8. Necessary and essential rules and regulations will be laid down for the improvement of social life and healthy relationships among the people.

Chapter III: Education: Article 31. The present system of co-education, where girls and boys acquire education side-by-side, will be abolished altogether.

Chapter V: Economic Order: Section II, article 81. The system, under which men and women are working together, will be completely abolished and Islamic principles will be strictly observed.

Article 83. The obvious right of every individual to demand his permissable and legal wage will be legally guaranteed.

The Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan headed by Malawi Moh'd Yunus Khalis broke away from Hekmatyar's party of the same name in 1980. The two charters contain the same articles concerning women (Articles 81 & 83 appear in Articles 80 & 82 of the Khalis document; *Afghan Jehad* 1(4):48).

Wider participatory roles for women are alluded to in the Charter of the Mahaz-e-melli Islami-e-Afghanistan (NIFA) led by Sayyed Ahmad Gailani (*Afghan Jehad* 1(3):55):

A- Domestic Affairs, Article 5. NIFA supports social, economic and political justice and the participation of all the people, both women and men, in the task of development and progress of the country in accordance with the principles of the religion of Islam and acceptable national traditions and opposes all kinds of discrimination, exploitation, and despotism and oppression.

Article 7. NIFA considers free education, with no discrimination whatsoever, as the legitimate and clear right of the people of Afghanistan, and actively supports overall and effective measures towards popularization of literacy. 'Acquiring of knowledge is obligatory on all Muslims, men and women.' (*Hadith*).

The Charter of the Jamiat-e-Islami (*Afghan Jehad* 1(3);75) of Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani proffers only a generalized set of aims which include: "The Jamiat wants women to enjoy all the rights and privileges granted to them by the teachings of Islam and to assume their proper status in a civilized Islamic society." The equally cryptic 21-article Charter of Harakat-e-Enqelab-e-Islami Afghanistan (*Afghan Jehad* 1(4):61) of Mawlawi Mohammadi contains a number of articles covering the elimination of unIslamic habits, discrimination, nourishing of talents, and mobilizing human resources without indicating whether women are, or are not, included. Only Article 12 makes specific mention women: "Reviving the legal rights of women and orphans, and, in accordance with the principles of *Shariat*, nourishing their standard of knowledge and education.

The Charter of Jabhai-e-Melli-e-Najat-e-Afghanistan (NFL; *Afghan Jehad* 1(3):71) led by Sebghatullah Mojeddedi, citing as a major objective the "enforcement" of the national will on the basis of Islamic injunctions, does not refer to women at all but lists aims which possible can be construed as including women:

Chapter II: Domestic Policy, Article 9. The NFL considers free Islamic education for all Afghan people as a legitimate right and strongly supports the adoption of effective and overall measures for a campaign against illiteracy.

Article 13. The NLF strongly prevents the propagation of thought and the dissemination of such political and cultural ideas which are contrary to the teachings of Islam and Afghan culture.

In its Charter, the Ittehad Islami-e-Afghanistan (Afghan Jehad 1(4):63) of Prof. Abdur Rasool Sayyaf concentrates on characterizing the charisma and popular support required of a leader, without mentioning women. It is, however, the only charter which allows for the application of the Islamic concept of ijetehad (analogical religious interpretation) which has been evoked in the past in behalf of arguments favoring more active roles for women.

An official published pronouncement which disturbed many men as well as women was issued in March 1988 when the Supreme Council of the 7-party Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahideen (IUAM) sponsored the formation of an interim government. On 4/24/88, they published a set of guidelines (Ittehad-e-Islami; Afghan Jehad 1(4):22) This document consists of four chapters with 87 articles. Only one specifically mentions women. Article LVII, in Chapter III, outlining the Powers and Duties of Government, directs the government to:

> Develop moral virtues and combat corruption and denegration by observing the principles of purdah (seclusion) provided for in the Sharia, ensure the unalienable rights of all individuals, men and women alike, and provide dignified conditions in the light of Islamic teachings.

Although the effectiveness of the interim government is widely questioned, this document seems to reflect a disturbing collective thinking among the Peshawar leadership and projects a dim future for women. One article cannot adequately address the problems facing women and certainly the insinuation that corruption and denigration must necessarily rise from women's public presence is deplorable.

At the two-week Shura (Consultative Council) meetings held in Islamabad in Feb.-Mar. 1989 to elect yet another interim government, a proposal to include women was flatly rejected (personal communication).

Refugee communities teem with zealous conservatives who manipulate Islam by evoking the purity of its teachings so as to legitimize their leadership while delegitimizing moderate voices. The moderates have yet to establish effective communication channels to these conservative decision-makers whose jehad mentality - reflecting clerical orthodoxy even though few heads of the major factions are actually members of the clergy - is more extreme. Most Afghans, however, would more likely agree with the view that "Women have significant rights under Islam and have played important roles in Islamic history. I do not see any reason why they could not play their constructive roles in the new Afghanistan." (Hedayat Amin-Arsala, quoted in the Afghan Information Center Monthly Bulletin, #94:10.)

For the present, however, the majority of Afghans in Pakistan let the conservatives speak for them, fearing that to do otherwise would compromise the reputations of both sexes. Nevertheless, privately, both male and female critics contend that egalitarian Islam glorifies the individual, regardless of sex or status, and that the current enforced orthodoxy betrays Islam and perverts the original intent of the Prophet to provide a respected place for women in society. Moreover, these pragmatic groups predict that the hard-liners will crumble the status of the resistance once some semblance of normalcy resumes. Prospects will be discussed more fully later in this paper, but first, some demographic changes affecting female attitudes toward work.

Demographic Changes

Possibly nearly a million men have been killed or disabled in the jehad, although accurate figures are impossible to obtain. There are tens of thousands of widows with their children among the refugees; thousands of young girls have lost their intended mates; other thousands have suddenly become sole supporters of their households because their husbands are totally disabled.

Tradition will dictate that these women be provided for as enjoined in the Qur'an (S.4:36). The interim government Guidelines reaffirms this commitment in Article XVI, as do the party charters. For instance, Article 15 of the Charter of the Jabha-e-Melli-e-Nejat-e-Afghanistan (Mojeddedi) states that the party must "support the creation of all kinds of facilities for helping families whose guardians and or members have achieved the high position of martyrdom or have lost their capacity to work."

No one has yet suggested any practical means for accomplishing this. Tentative discussions have only just begun to identify some of the social problems which will accompany the economic responsibilities of caring for so many unattached women with their numerous children.

More multiple marriages seem to be taking place. Indeed, the institution of plural marriages in Islam was encouraged in the time of the Prophet when wars left countless women and children without sustenance and protection. The customary practice of the leverite, whereby a widow is forced to marry her deceased husband's brother in direct violation of a Qur'anic injunction (S.4:19), is reported to be on the rise after years of decline. Other widows reluctantly marry older men or subteenagers, some only 7 years old, in order to provide for their children.

Another worrisome development is the apparent breakdown of normal marriage contract procedures. Although discriminatory practices of marrying girls to pay off debts or acquire political or social advantage were by no means unknown (Olesen, 1982), preferred marriage partners were first cousins, and, in general, elaborate rituals associated with the selection of mates were mindful of the future well-being of the bride. Older women were responsible for assessing the age and character of the groom as well as the acceptability of his family. They drove hard bargains for advantageous financial arrangements to ensure respect and status for the bride. These important responsibilities were an integral part of maintaining a woman's status within the family and throughout her women's networks and communities (Doubleday, 1987; Shalinsky, 1989).

These women's networks have largely broken down among the refugee communities in Pakistan because mobility is so restricted. Too many first cousins have been killed and desirable men are at a premium so, sadly, too many marriages are being contracted hastily, by men, for less than palatable considerations.

Urban refugees are also loath to incur marriage expenses because of their poor economic situation. Inadequate education is another deterrent. Educational facilities for all refugees are minimal and many young men opt for the jehad rather than school. The paucity of eligible educated men further depletes a girl's chances for marriage. Because of these factors, numbers of educated refugee girls, although they have passed the traditionally preferred age for marriage, rebel against becoming second wives or marriage to the old, the immature or the poorly educated.

Changing attitudes toward work outside the home.

Although the political rhetoric guarantees services for widows and wives of the disabled, it will be a long time before any state apparatus can expect to provide effective services. A lot, therefore, will depend on the women themselves and their attitudes toward work.

To understand changes which appear to be taking place among the refugees, some brief comments on the status of women in the work force before the war are in order.

According to a preliminary census taken in 1972 (Kerr, 1978:2) and related government statistics, only about 8% of women over the age of 8, in both urban and rural

areas, were economically active, i.e., receiving earnings (Afghan Demographic Survey [ADS], 1975:93). However, several qualifications should be kept in mind regarding these figures. Housewives were not included, and many unpaid economic contributions to household and community were taken for granted (Doubleday, 1988). In addition, gainful employment of women was considered to reflect shamefully on male ego-images as sole supporters of their families. Many women did work for earnings but this was rarely admitted to outsiders, least of all census takers.

In the rural sample of production-related activities, including agriculture and animal husbandry (Tavakolian, 1984), weavers and spinners represented the highest per cent of women reporting earned income. Women from poorer families working as servants for the more affluent, were also included in this sample.

Significantly absent were the managerial services rural women performed, although unpaid and largely unsung. The management of the household and the training of young girls were totally in their hands, and women were usually the custodians of family finances and household supplies. These women, typically matriarchs, were responsible for distributing harvested supplies in amounts calculated to last until the next harvest was brought in. If the woman was inept, the family either starved or went into debt. These qualities belied the stereotypes which characterized rural women as helpless, ignorant non-entities; it is precisely these qualities which have sustained women in exile and which will be of inordinate importance after repatriation.

Handicraft production for economic gain was mostly a regional phenomenon. Knotted-carpet weaving and felt-making dominated in the north, including Herat; flat-woven carpets (gelim) were also produced in the north and in large numbers around Ghazni and in the Hazarajat. In Kandahar and the Helmand Valley, embroidered and beaded cap-making was popular, Embroidered turban caps (kola) were mostly offered for sale in the northern cities, although almost every family made them for family use. Embroidered sheepskin coats (postin), which enjoyed great popularity during the 1960s and 70s in the West, were made predominantly in Kabul where Afghan and foreign entrepreneurs set up workshops, although the craft was native to the Ghazni area. Foreign designers set up thriving businesses by providing gelim-makers with modern, state-of-the-art designs.

Almost all these economic activities were joint male/female efforts: the men secured the raw materials and managed the marketing of the goods made by the women. But, as in all discussions of Afghan patterns, exceptions must be noted. Women sometimes took embroidered turban caps to marketplaces in the north, and they sold beaded caps and embroidered shirt pieces on the sidewalks of Kandahar.

Most women in the workforce were found in the cities; primarily in Kabul but in increasing numbers in provincial urban centers. By far the highest percent were professionals, technicians and administrators employed by the government, with a lesser number in industries, sales and production, or self-employed in private enterprises. These included shop owners, shop workers, household-based sellers, street vendors, knitters, tailors, hair stylists, embroiderers, and food and beverage producers running small, household-based factories (ADS, 1987).

As noted, in most of pre-war Afghanistan gainful extra-domestic activities for women were generally discouraged. In Pakistan today, however, economic distress and the idleness and boredom of refugee life have tempered this attitude. When men are unable to find jobs, their insistence on purdah becomes less rigid. As one charismatic lady nurse put it: "When there is no food on the table, men open the door."

Rural women are participating in growing numbers of income-generating and self-reliance programs, mainly refugee-oriented tailoring projects to produce quilts, school uniforms and bags. Those who can, embroider fashion pieces of exquisite

beauty which are stitched by other refugee women into garments and sundries under the supervision of designers, mostly foreigners.

Urban women, mostly from families of mid-to-lower range professionals and bureaucrats, assist in administering these projects. Others attend, teach at or manage higher education institutions, including nurses-training, clerical instruction and English language classes. There is now an obstetrics and gynecology hospital with mobile outreach clinics staffed entirely by Afghan female professionals. Others administer social welfare programs, making weekly trips into the refugee camps to identify needy cases.

Most of these women must be provided door-to-door transportation. This means that although female professionals are desperately needed in the remoter refugee camps, few are permitted to work where overnight stays are required. Many widows, however, are finding their own way to social service projects located in Peshawar, proving that when the need is great and the services are suitably structured, women will take the initiative to be more independent.

Among rural women, leadership qualities are being utilized in the training of female community health workers. Such programs prove that women learn well and quickly and that they can pass on information persuasively, particularly in the areas of preventive and primary health care. Success has been most notable when individual workers are assigned units of up to 30 houses within their own sections of the refugee camps. This creates a semblance of pre-war ethnically-oriented, kin-related villages and urban wards.

Some of the more effective health education teaching materials on personal and environmental hygiene reflect Islam's emphasis on cleanliness (S. 4:43 and S. 5:6). One booklet promoting good health practices as an integral part of Islam rather than a set of medical requirements makes extensive use of the Hadith (Sayings of the Prophet) (Shaheen, 1986). The material covers such topics as proper nutrition, breast feeding, weaning, hand washing, dental hygiene and proscriptions against depositing human waste near water sources and public places.

As more and more women take advantage of opportunities and participate, programs expand.

PROSPECTS

How then do refugee women envision their roles once they return to Afghanistan? With tragic exceptions, their composure is remarkable. It may be that with all they have gone through, and are going through now, the future cannot be imagined to be any worse. It may also be that many cannot conceive how great the devastation is, and what a monumental task lies before them.

Nevertheless, contrary to those who sense the vaunted Afghan family support system is breaking down, the vast majority of these women put their faith in their families and their communities at large (N.H. Dupree, 1987b). Most look forward to returning to normal domestic lives. Motherhood will remain the main priority option for the majority of Afghan women.

Those without past histories of working for earned income outside the home confess they have uncertain feelings about the future. They work in Pakistan mainly to augment meager incomes and assuage boredom, but they also consider the assistance they give to disadvantaged women as their contribution to the jehad. Consequently their work is ego-satisfying, and some smilingly admit that getting out of the house and making extra money on their own has been a gratifying experience. Perhaps, they concede, their former purely domestic life-style will seem too confining when they return.

Those women from educated mid-income urban families are candidly pragmatic when they speak of the future. In Pakistan their work is respected because it is an important part of the overall jehad effort. But many members of their families remain in Afghanistan and have no conception of the refugee mentality. Will these members be reconciled to the idea of women producing items for sale or working outside the home? Or will they still consider it shameful for women to engage in these activities? Social pressures will figure predominantly in determining what these women may or may not do on their return.

Women also worry about the attitudes of fiercely ideological younger men whose lives have been totally consumed by emotions rising from 10 years of war. When the enemy has gone, these women ask, who will be the object of their aggressions? May it not take the form of restricting, or even oppressing, women?

Professional women wonder if they will be given constructive options if prevailing attitudes "keep us cooped up like a lot of chickens." One articulate woman recounts with scorn the day a prominent political leader offhandedly remarked: "Do not worry, we shall make you ministers - of your own households." She was not amused.

Such encounters lead educated women to speak of waging two jehads: a jehad against foreign invaders and a jehad against an undesirable ideology. The professionals know they will be desperately needed in post-repatriation Afghanistan and many men, including professionals in Pakistan and military commanders inside Afghanistan, acknowledge that Islam encourages education for women, obligates women to work for the good of the community and assures women equal recognition for work (S.4:32). Nevertheless, they insist there is no reason why women cannot carry out their tasks adequately while still observing purdah.

Such views do not rise entirely from the refugee experience. Pre-war attitudes toward co-education, for instance, were decidedly ambivalent. From co-educational primary schools pupils moved on to separate secondary schools and then came together again at Kabul University. Maturity, it was reasoned, would insure proper social behavior, but in reality a good deal of uneasiness existed. Similarly, although men and women worked together in offices, women were expected to socialize within the family and not with their colleagues (Knabe, 1977).

And it must be remembered that the desirability of public participation of women was advocated mainly by the more Westernized groups in urban centers (N.H. Dupree, 1984: 309). Others harbored an honest distaste for Western-style institutions and warned that education and emancipation for women must surely lead to sexual anarchy and the total destruction of Afghan culture. These undercurrents of dissent erupted periodically (L. Dupree, 1971:17), and it is these attitudes which have risen to the forefront during the past 10 years.

Indeed, many women engaged in activities in Pakistan do not question the appropriateness of segregated programs. They dress Arab-style, ankle-length coatdresses with separate cape-like head-coverings (chadri), which they say is an Islamic symbol which will be worn by Muslim women throughout the world to proclaim unity among the Islamic ummah (community). These women are equally committed to participating in Afghanistan's reconstruction.

One positive development has been what numbers of young women, regardless of their stand on purdah, describe as "a gift of the jehad" - a new sense of service. Before the war it was extremely difficult to motivate urban professional women to work outside urban centers. Extension work carried no status and no extra remuneration; beyond this the reluctance of city women even to contemplate service in the countryside stemmed in good part from the fact that urban women were almost completely isolated from rural populations. They believed in the stereotyped image which

depicted rural women as superstitious, backward ignoramuses, too stupid to help themselves. Few ventured beyond the city; many were genuinely afraid to do so.

In Pakistan these women have come in contact with rural women for the first time and have developed a compassion for them as well as an admiration for their resourcefulness and strength. The jehad has also enhanced their understanding of Islamic values which in essence stress egalitarianism and service to the community.

How long such attitudes will endure after these girls resume lives with some degree of normalcy is hard to predict, but a unique opportunity exists to promote these sentiments before they dissipate for lack of opportunities.

On returning, refugee women will interact with women who have remained in Kabul. The leftist government's promised era of absolute equality of women with men never materialized (Beattie, 1984; Tapper, 1984). Female Party members enjoyed certain privileges but in reality no positive reform-oriented programs on behalf of women were implemented (N.H. Dupree, 1984: 327-339). Initially, these Party members may be ostracized and require special consideration, but the non-Party women, who continued to participate in the multi-faceted opportunities begun before the war, will probably reinforce efforts by returning refugee women to establish constructive programming. Certainly it would be wasteful not to use the talents of these professionals.

APPROACHES TOWARD INVOLVEMENT

In spite of the fact that the number of involved women is minuscule, a heartening momentum has begun. It will be tragic if women are underutilized as they were in the past because old-style ineffective systems are reintroduced. Now is the time to start anew by introducing innovative planning strategies bearing direct impact on the welfare of women. This means women should be included in all phases of reconstruction planning.

It must be realized, however, that separate-but-equal policies may well be reinstituted, at least initially. Typically such separate institutions are far from equal, but this does not need to be so if equitable planning, financing, equipping and monitoring are assiduously promoted. Separate need not imply inferior if vigilance is institutionalized.

Programming in both urban and rural areas should focus on small local communities so women may reestablish women's networks and communities, providing services allowing them to achieve self-sufficiency and fulfill social and personnal goals. Such women's programming should be coordinated with and compliment overall health and educational programs which will be of initial high priority. Specialized programs will follow.

Needs and objectives for each and every project must be defined by the Afghans. This is of paramount importance. Many Afghans, moderate and conservative, are sincerely apprehensive about what they call "cultural imperialism": now that the foreign military invaders have been repulsed, other outsiders, no matter how well-intentioned, sit poised, ready to engulf the nation with new sets of foreign values.

In June 1988, an Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) was organized by over 50 NGOs working in the NWFP. SWABAC, Southern and Western Afghanistan and Baluchistan Agency Coordination, a similar body based in Quetta, was formed in September 1989. Both ACBAR and SWABAC are dedicated to the principle that the Afghans must take the lead, with the assistance of the international community, in nurturing grassroots programs which will be culturally compatable and flexible enough to include a variety of approaches accommodating distinct geographic, social and economic needs (Fange: 8-10; Rees: 11-13). Women's needs figure prominently in their planning.

Specific priorities include the social rehabilitation of paraplegics and other handicapped, which to date has been a sadly neglected component of refugee and reconstruction planning. According to conservative estimates, possibly 3-5,000 Afghan men, women and children have been disabled; one among 10 children will have to contend with a lifetime of physical disfigurement (Appeal of the Sec'y-Gen'l. 1988: 30-31). Special attention to training women in physiotherapy will be urgently needed because women will bear the brunt of caring for the handicapped. The handicapped are difficult for any society to care for adequately and constructively. This is all the more acute for Afghanistan which is technically unprepared and socially ill-equipped to provide a dignified place for the disabled. Handicapped women are most often set aside by husbands, who take second wives, and consigned to lives of abject lonliness. Instead of being isolated, men, women and chlidren must be provided with education and trades so that they may resume respected places within their families. Their skills can be utilized to bring them into the mainstream of society to pursue productive, rewarding lives while contributing to reconstruction.

The same will be true for widows and wives of the disabled who will constitute the largest group of women in need of increased earning potential. Neither Islam nor Afghan culture will permit women to wander as destitutes: traditional and/or tribal support systems will not tolerate this. However, it is feared that over the long run the huge number of widowed and handicapped may place an intolerable burden on the capacity of extended families to fulfill their traditional obligations (Boesen, p. 58).

Instead of being burdens on society, women must become contributing members. This can be done through the extension of credit facilities permitting them to establish small businesses utilizing surplus production of dairy products, poultry and fruit, vegetable processing, sericulture and handicrafts, etc.

Critics point to the fact that Afghan women have rarely engaged in such activities. True, but as noted above, men and women traditionally have worked together in interrelated family production/marketing endeavors. There seems to be no reason why those patterns could not be extended to new enterprises, which might even include non-family members in kin-related communities, thus strengthening community cohesiveness.

The community health worker programs already functioning in Pakistan should be expanded. This will require numerous support components in which educated urban women could be involved - all fields of training in community services, the production of non-formal educational teaching aids, radio programming, law and management. An employment exchange will be needed to facilitate these programs.

Most importantly there must be some means of allowing women's voices to be heard. Afghan women have never been militant in demanding the rights provided them in legal statutes (N.H. Dupree, 1984:311) and there is no reason to push them into doing so. Only the relatively limited membership of RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women in Afghanistan) characterizes itself as "militant defenders of Afghan freedom-loving women" and openly castigates the "anti-woman reactionary fanatics" who RAWA claims shame Islam by murdering and raping in the name of religion (Payam-e-Zan: 54-57). But judging from current attitudes in Pakistan, the majority of refugee women would welcome the establishment of a non-political, non-formal meeting place where women could exchange views in a relaxed social environment.

How these goals may best be realized will depend on the composition of a new government in Kabul. Regional and ethnic particulars, available personnel, local conditions and attitudes will affect the selection of specific projects and details will necessarily remain in abeyance until these assessments can be made. Certainly, to propose that women step out into the public sector prematurely would be detrimental in the long run.

However, no matter what complexion the future government of Afghanistan may assume leadership will have to provide a dignified place for women. Afghan women will demand it and they should not be denied.

POSTSCRIPT

In 1989 Afghan women refugees in Pakistan took two innovative steps.

In May, at a workshop sponsored by a Dutch foundation in Islamabad, women discussed what they perceived their roles might be after repatriation, put forth their ideas on what they thought would be appropriate activities for women, and composed profiles on the leadership qualities they considered to be necessary in those charged with designing and implementing women's programs for the future.

The participants represented a range of disparate opinion-setters, from arch conservatives to modern activists, so some issues were hotly debated before a consensus on basic guidelines was reached. A summary includes the following:

1) Women's roles: motherhood; child nurturing, including health and education: community service, including health and education; maintenance of traditional values; economic contributions to family welfare.

2) Appropriate programs: pre-schools; child development in physical, educational and social spheres; social work among widows, orphans and the disabled, including training for economically productive endeavors; agricultural/animal husbandry projects, including veterinary training and improved food production and processing; women's "information bazaars" and markets; credit opportunities; health and education radio programming; visual aids production; training in all fields, particularly management, bookkeeping, program design and organization; advocacy groups, including a center where women could meet for support and planning.

3) Leadership qualities: Afghan; Muslim; "good character." i.e., well-behaved and careful of expression; non-political; acceptance by community at large; motivated; hard-working; sympathetic; skilled in arbitration.

The principle of interrelating programs was considered of utmost importance. Above all, it was held that success would depend on male attitudes (which were debated at some length), particularly male acceptance of both specific projects and of women's extradomestic participation in general. Another recurring theme emphasized that any foreign presence should be kept to an absolute minimum, in purely supportive and consultative capacities.

In August a group of about 80 women in Peshawar met to form the Training and Vocational Center for Afghan Muslim Women. Their immediate objectives are to open a center where women can come together for a variety of activities such as classes in reading and writing the Qur'an and training in family care, income generation and pre-school education.

They also want to develop a library, a job exchange and an information bureau to function along with the classes. Outreach social work, with training components, in and around Peshawar, as well as repatriation planning, preparation and training will be introduced as this fledgling organization gets underway.

Hopefully these steps will begin a process which could have far-reaching consequences for women in the future of Afghanistan.

NOTES

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